II. Listing of Claims

This Listing of Claims replaces all prior versions and listings of the claims:

        1-5.   (Canceled).

        6.   (Currently Amended) A method for client-side management of communications channels, the method comprising:

        determining a maximum number of simultaneous connections N supportable by a client to other entities within a virtual world controlled by a server based on a connection speed of the client to a network and a processor speed of a central processing unit within the client;

        identifying between one and N entities that meet a predefined criterion from a plurality of entities, the plurality of entities and the client being represented by different avatars within the virtual world controlled by the server;

        granting permission to the identified entities to communicate with the client by sending a permission message from the client to each of the identified entities; and

        revoking permission to communicate with the client held by entities of the plurality of entities that are not among the identified entities by sending a revocation message from the client to each of the entities that are not among the identified entities,

        wherein the determining, identifying, granting, and revoking steps are performed by the client;

        wherein the predefined criterion is a distance to the client within a the virtual world controlled by the server, wherein the plurality of entities and the client are represented by the different avatars within the virtual world such that the distances between each of the plurality of entities and the client are calculated using coordinate information of the avatars within the virtual world;

        repeating the identifying, granting, and revoking steps as the avatars move about the virtual world.

        7.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 further comprising:

        determining whether the client has received permission from each of the identified entities to communicate with each entity; and

if permission has not been received from one of the identified entities, identifying between one and N entities that meet the predefined criterion, wherein the identifying excludes the previously identified entity from which permission has not been received.

8-21.   (Cancelled)

22.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 further comprising:

determining whether the client has permission to communicate with each of the identified entities; and

if the client does not have permission to communicate with one or more of the identified entities, identifying between one and N entities that meet the predefined criterion, wherein the identifying excludes the one or more identified entities the client does not have permission to communicate with.

23.   (Currently Amended) A method for client-side management of communications channels, the method comprising:

determining a maximum number of simultaneous connections N supportable by a client to other entities within a virtual world;

identifying between one and N entities that meet a predefined criterion from a plurality of entities within the virtual world;

determining whether the identified entities have permission to communicate with the client;

granting permission to communicate with the client to the identified entities that do not have permission to communicate with the client; and

revoking permission to communicate with the client to those entities of the plurality of entities that are not among the identified entities,

wherein the determining, identifying, granting, and revoking steps are performed by the client;

wherein the predefined criterion is a distance to the client within a the virtual world, wherein the plurality of entities and the client are represented by different avatars within the

virtual world such that the distance between each of the plurality of entities and the client are calculated using coordinate information <u>of the avatars</u> within the virtual world<u>;</u>

<u>repeating the identifying, determining whether the identified entities have permission to communicate with the client, granting, and revoking steps as the avatars move about the virtual world</u>.

24.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 further comprising:

identifying one or more of the identified entities that meet a second predefined criterion;

wherein the granting permission to communicate with the client is limited to the one or more identified entities meeting the second criterion;

wherein the revoking permission to communicate with the client includes the one or more identified entities not meeting the second criterion.

25.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the second predefined criterion is based on a hardware or software characteristic of the identified entity.

26.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein determining whether the identified entities have permission to communicate with the client further comprises maintaining a permission table associating each of the entities with a first indicator representing whether permission to communicate with the client has been granted by the client.

27.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 26, wherein the permission table associates each of the entities with a second indicator representing whether permission to communicate with the entity has been granted by the entity.

28.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, further comprising identifying one or more of the identified entities that meet a second predefined criterion;

29.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 28, wherein the granting permission to communicate with the client is limited to the one or more identified entities meeting the second criterion.

30.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 28, wherein the revoking permission to communicate with the client includes the one or more identified entities not meeting the second criterion.

31.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 28, wherein the second predefined criterion is based on a hardware or software characteristic of the identified entity.

32.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, further comprising determining whether the identified entities have permission to communicate with the client and granting permission to communicate with the client to the identified entities that are determined to not have permission to communicate with the client.

33.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32, wherein determining whether the identified entities have permission to communicate with the client comprises maintaining a permission table associating each of the entities with a first indicator representing whether permission to communicate with the client has been granted by the client.

34.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 33, wherein the permission table associates each of the identified entities with a second indicator representing whether permission to communicate with the entity has been granted by the entity.

35.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the predefined criterion includes a hardware or software characteristic of each of the plurality of entities.